

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

Two Must-Take Tests for Women

With all the roles and responsibilities you have as a woman, it's sometimes easy to get caught up in doing things for others and letting the things you need to do for yourself wait. When it comes to your health, there's no better time than now to take care of yourself.

Two important decisions you can make right now are to have a Pap test and a mammogram. These tests can help detect cervical and breast cancer in their earliest, most treatable stages.

About the Pap test

A Pap test has helped doctors find and successfully treat cervical cell changes in thousands of women before the abnormalities could become cervical cancer. The test is a simple procedure in which your doctor gently removes a small sample of cells from your cervix. The sample is then examined under a microscope for any abnormalities.

An abnormal Pap test result does not necessarily mean you have cancer. Other conditions, such as inflammation of the cervix, can cause an abnormal test result.

Women ages 19 to 64 who are sexually active and still have a cervix should have this important test at least every three years. Women over age 65 should have a Pap test as often as their doctor advises.*



About mammograms

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women. For 2005, the American Cancer Society® predicted that an estimated 211,240 new cases of invasive breast cancer would occur among women in the U.S. For an individual woman, the lifetime risk of developing breast cancer is one in eight.*

Studies have shown that mammography is an effective way to detect cancer early, when it is most treatable. That's why it's recommended that all women ages 40 and older get a mammogram every year.**

Now that you know how important these tests are, take the time today to schedule your appointments to have them, and encourage loved ones to have them as well. ■

*Healthwise® Knowledgebase. 2009.

**These preventive care guidelines are taken from recognized authorities on preventive care.

Another test to consider

One of the most important things you can do to reduce your risk of a stroke or heart attack is to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level. Ideally, your blood pressure should be lower than 120/80.

Actions you can take to improve your blood pressure:

- Follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) found on diet.org with a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products
- Reduce sodium intake to about 2400 mg per day, and increase potassium intake to about 3500 mg per day
- Reduce alcohol intake to 1-2 drinks per day
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Identify ways to reduce stress
- Increase physical activity to at least 30 minutes at moderate level, 5 days a week



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